

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 16794

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR FR UR

SUBJECT: FRANCO-SOVIET RELATIONS MAY BE COOLING

1. DANIEL LEQUERTIER, QUAI OFFICER IN CHARGE, EASTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS, TOLD EMBOFF DURING A DISCUSSION OF QUAI IMPRESSIONS OF GISCARD'S POLISH TRIP (SEPTTEL) THAT IT WAS "NOT TOTALLY INACCURATE" TO SPEAK OF A COOLING-OFF IN PARIS/MOSCOW RELATIONS.

2. LEQUERTIER'S ANALYSIS APPEARED INGENUOUS: SOVIET LEADERS HAVE NOT YET COME TO KNOW GISCARD, MATTERS OF PERSONAL STYLE AND CONTACTS ARE MORE IMPORTANT IN RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS THAN IS GENERALLY ASSUMED, GISCARD'S TRIP TO THE SOVIET UNION--NOW SCHEDULED FOR THE FIRST HALF OF OCTOBER--WILL THEREFORE DISPELL MUCH OF THE COOLNESS.

3. LEQUERTIER ALSO OFFERED SOME CONVENTIONAL REASONS, HOWEVER, WHICH HE WAS CAREFUL TO LABEL AS PERSONAL, FOR SOVIET DISENCHANTMENT: THE SOVIETS HAVE BEEN IRRITATED
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BY GISCARD'S SEEMING WILLINGNESS TO ALLOW BOTH PRIME

MINISTER CHIRAC AND MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR PONIATOWSKI TO MAKE BLISTERING ATTACKS ON THE FRENCH COMMUNISTS; PRC VICE-PREMIER T'ENG HSIAO-PING'S SPECTACULAR VISIT TO PARIS WAS, LIKE GISCARD'S TRIP TO POLAND, CONSIDERED "PROVOCATIVE" BY THE SOVIETS.

4. WHILE THE GOF CONTINUES TO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW AND HAS OFFERED SOME EARNESTS OF ITS GOOD INTENTIONS (GISCARD'S STATEMENT THAT A COMMON EUROPEAN DEFENSE IS INOPPORTUNE AT THE PRESENT TIME; HIS REPORTED SUPPORT OF THE JULY 22 DATE FOR THE CSCE SUMMIT), THE QUAI DOES NOT EXPECT ANY SIGNIFICANT AMELIORATION IN FRANCO-SOVIET RELATIONS UNTIL GISCARD MAKES HIS STATE VISIT.

5. COMMENT: LEQUERTIER'S COMMENTS ARE THE FIRST OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION WE HAVE OF RECENT INDICATIONS THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE NOT BEEN PLEASED WITH GOF COMPORTMENT. IN ADDITION TO THE REASONS LISTED BY LEQUERTIER, WE CAN ADD GISCARD'S ANNOUNCEMENT TERMINATING VE-DAY CELEBRATIONS, AND UNCONVINCING GOF DENIALS THAT THE FRENCH AND GERMANS ARE DISCUSSING THE STATIONING OF PLUTON TACTICAL ATOMIC WEAPONS IN GERMANY. THE COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER HUMANITE'S CRITICISM OF THE POLES FOR THEIR EFFUSIVENESS IN PRAISING GISCARD WAS ANOTHER TIPOFF OF MOSCOW'S IRRITATION WITH THE CURRENT FRENCH ATTITUDE. GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS ARE IMPORTANT TO GISCARD FOR INTERNAL AS WELL AS EXTERNAL REASONS. WITH UNEMPLOYMENT RISING TO THE LEVEL OF POSSIBLE SOCIAL INSTABILITY, GISCARD CANNOT AFFORD TO HAVE SOVIET HOSTILITY AGGRAVATING HIS OTHER POTENTIAL PROBLEMS WITH THE LEFT OPPOSITION. A DESIRE TO TURN THINGS AROUND WITH THE SOVIETS MAY EXPLAIN WHY GISCARD WAS WILLING TO MAKE THE UNFORTUNATE PUBLIC STATEMENT THAT HE SYMPATHIZED WITH SOVIET FEARS OF AN INDEPENDENT EUROPEAN DEFENSE ARRANGEMENT.

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